Lovely Strange Dark

ULTRABAROQUE DEPROGRAMMER

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CHAPTER 29

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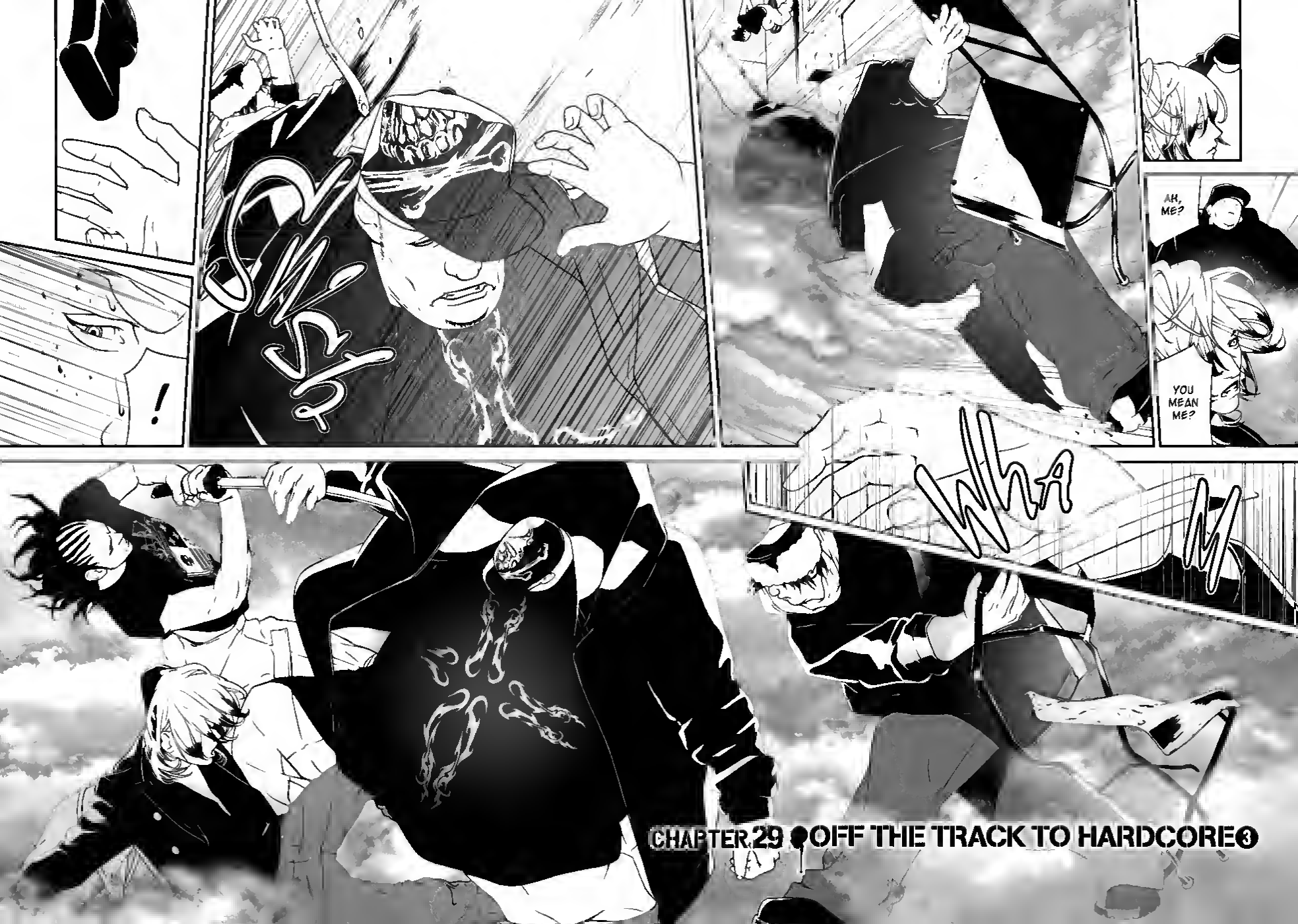
IF YOU BEHAVE, I CAN DO THIS WITHOUT KILLING YOU.
TAKA-ZAWA!



CHAPTER 29 ● OFF THE TRACK TO HARDCORE ❸

Clatter
JUST IN TIME! TAKAZAWA!
TELL YOUR BOSS HE CAN COME AFTER US ANYTIME, IF HE'S GOT THE GUTS.
MAYBE IT'S DIFFERENT WITH YOU JAPANESE SQUATTERS.
BUT MY GROUP HAS LOTS OF WAR VETS.
HE'S OUT.
THERE ARE PLENTY MORE WHO WANT A PIECE OF PSYCHIC WORK!
ARE YOU OK!?
WAIT, WHY'D YOU USE MY ALIAS?
JUST CALL ME THE DEPRO-GRAMMER

H-HEY, BE CAREFUL
BUT YOU KNOW, THAT POSE...
HEY! TIE THIS GUY UP!
IT LOOKS MORE LIKE YOU'RE UP AT BAT THAN PLAYING SAMURAI.
EVEN IF YOU HELPED US.
I WAS BORN AND RAISED IN ASAKUSA, JAPAN. WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
GEEZ. JUST SWING IT NORMALLY.
Hup!
It didn't cut me.
SO YOU LIKE PLAYING JAPANESE WARRIOR? DO YOU EVEN SPEAK JAPANESE?
IT'S SAFE IF YOU HIT WITH THE BLUNT SIDE

SORRY
SORRY
YOU CAN'T SPAR THE SAME WAY YOU SLICE UP A RADISH.
REGARDLESS, THAT IS A FAKE SWORD FROM A TOURIST SHOP.
THAT'S POINTLESS. HE DOESN'T KNOW ANY-THING.
WE CAME HERE TO ASK UGLY FOR HELP.
WHY'D THEY ATTACK YOU? SHOULD WE BEAT SOME ANSWERS OUTTA THIS GUY?
YOU SHOULD THANK THEM FOR TAKING ON PW.
HE WAS PROGRAMMED WITH THE SINGULAR PURPOSE OF CAPTURING ME ALIVE,
BUT HE'S JUST A REGULAR GUY.

SURE, HE WASN'T A GREAT GUY FROM THE START, BUT THOSE PW GUYS
HAVE NO QUALMS ABOUT TRAINING ORDINARY GUYS TO USE THEM AS DISPOSABLE KILLING MACHINES
WILL SUDDENLY RUSH OVER HIM
THE DAY HIS BRAINWASHING BREAKS, THE EMOTIONS OVER WHAT PW DID TO HIM AND HOW HE SHOT HIS FRIENDS
RIGHT NOW HE ISN'T FEELING ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS, BUT HE'LL REMEMBER IT ALL.
I
ZZZZ ZZZZ

IT'S AGIRI!
WE'RE SWITCHING OUT THE WATCH!
LET'S HEAD OUT!

VRRM
OWWW...
YEAH.
THOUGH OUR PLACE IS NICE AND QUIET
IF I KNEW I'D BE GETTING JAMMED INTO A TINY SPACE AND JOSTLED AROUND
THERE I WAS SO
? ISN'T THIS PLACE QUIET TOO?
AREN'T WE RIGHT NEXT TO THAT WORKSHOP WHERE YOU AND NOBIRU WERE?

WELCOME TO CLUB UGLY RAINBOW!
UGH... TOO LOUD...
UGLY'S BASE TURNS INTO A CLUB AT NIGHT.
IT'S FAMOUS IN THE UNDERGROUND SCENE. TO PEOPLE LIKE US
STILL, IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S JUST FOR FOREIGNERS, SORACHAI
IF YOU COME HERE, YOU MIGHT MEET SOMEONE FROM YOUR HOMELAND.
EVERYONE WANTS TO SPEAK IN THEIR NATIVE TONGUE EVERY SO OFTEN.

YOU'RE STANLEY, RIGHT? WHERE YOU FROM?
ICELAND
HUH?
NOT IRELAND? BUT STANLEY'S AN ENGLISH NAME—
IT'S A NICKNAME. MY REAL NAME'S A PAIN TO PRONOUNCE
PLUS I GREW UP HERE IN JAPAN. IN EDOGAWA
NEVER EVEN BEEN TO ICELAND
ISN'T THEIR LANGUAGE LIKE REALLY HARD TO LEARN?
EVERYONE SAYS THAT.
...HUH.

Unlike the rest,
the living area is quiet.
THERE HE IS!
AGIRI!
HEY, SORA SO THIS IS THE GUY—
SORRY FOR BARGING IN UM, I'M THE DEPRO
HE'S TAKA-ZAWA!

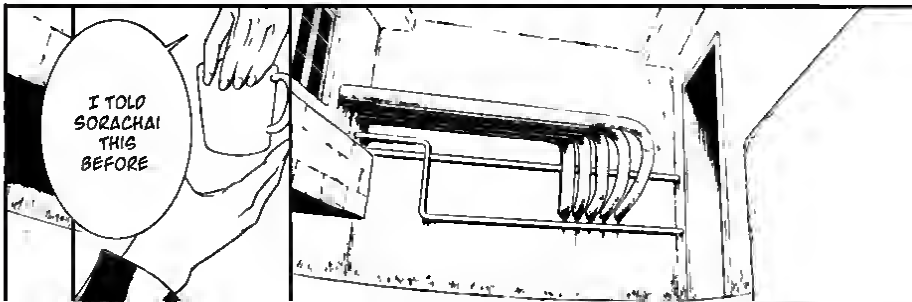
WHAT'S SO SCARY ABOUT HIM? HE LOOKS WEAKER THAN ME
TAKAZAWA, THIS IS AGIRI, THE MEDIATOR HERE.
NICE TO MEET YOU
NO GIRLS, HUH
IF YOU WANT TO FLIRT, YOU'RE FREE TO TRY YOUR LUCK ON THE CLUB FLOOR
THERE WERE SOME GIRLS WITH US,
BUT IT WAS A COMPLETE MESS. RAPES, GUYS PIMPING THEM OUT. WE DATE OUTSIDE NOW.
GUYS WHO WANTED TO GET MARRIED OR LIVE WITH A GIRL LEFT.
SAME WITH THE GAY GUYS.

THERE ARE FEMALE SQUATTER GANGS AND GAY ONES. WANNA GO TO ONE OF THEM?
I'LL STICK WITH UGLY, THANKS!
Back when you were fighting those guys in the black hoodies at Sora's workshop,
you totally dominated them.
SO WHAT'S WITH YOU?
HUH?
SO WHAT'S YOUR JOB, ANYWAY?
UM... HE'S UNEMPLOYED
SORACHAI, I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'VE BEEN HIDING IT TAKE PRIDE!
SO WHAT'S WITH YOU TODAY? YOU WERE EATING SWEET MOCHI AND CRYING.
SHUT UP! MY ABILITIES DEPEND ON THE SITUATION!
AND I WASN'T THE ONE WHO DOMINATED!

whisper
whisper
silence...
I DECON-STRUCT THE MIND.
YOU KNOW WHAT THAT IS, ASAKUSA BRAT?
They're surrounding me!
bustle
HUH?
SO NOT LIKE DECON-STRUCTING BUILDINGS?
..HUH?
clap
A DEPRO-GRAMMER!
IF YOU WANT TO SAY IT IN ENGLISH.
THAT'S RIGHT!
whisper
whisper
whisper
whisper
HM?
HM?
HM?
-deprogrammer

THIS..

THIS IS LIKE THE TOWER OF BABEL...!


I TOLD SORACHAI THIS BEFORE

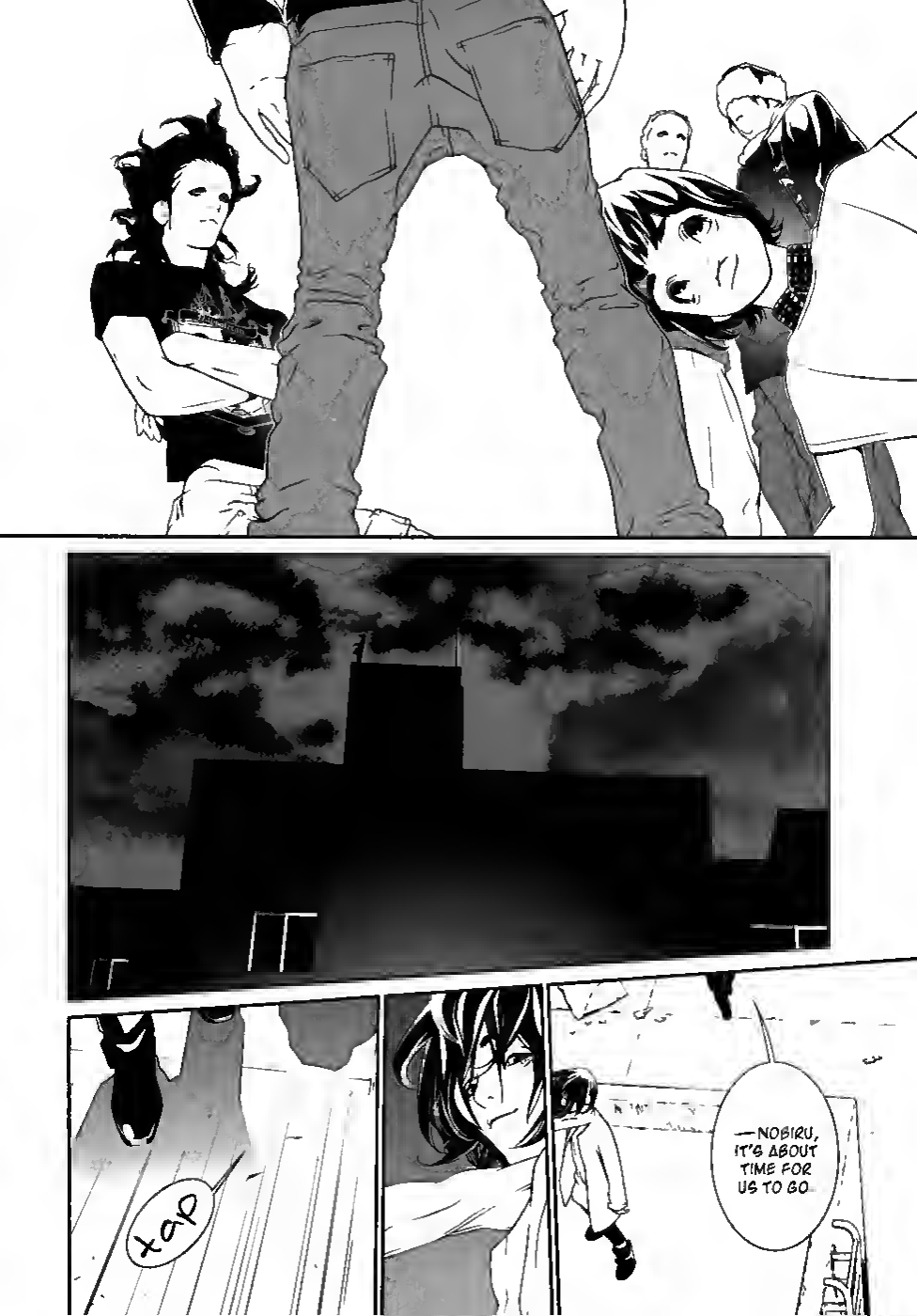
EVEN IF HE HOLDS YOU IN HIGH REGARD, PEOPLE OF RELIGIOUS FAITH VIEW DEPROGRAMMERS AS ENEMIES OF GOD.
IT'S A STRONG BELIEF. SORA'S EXPLAINING THINGS TO EVERYONE NOW.
WELL, BEING BOOED AT IN A BUNCH OF DIFFERENT LANGUAGES ALL AT ONCE WAS A FUN EXPERIENCE.
STILL, WASHERS ARE DETESTED EVEN MORE.
.....
SORRY FOR CAUSING TROUBLE. SORA SHOULD'VE SAID SOMETHING TO ME ——
...HM?

YOU DON'T SEE THAT TATTOO MUCH THESE DAYS
OH, SORRY
CAN'T VISIT A PUBLIC BATH BECAUSE OF IT
IT... IT'S FINE, I JUST HAPPENED TO REMEMBER THE MEANING...
THAT SYMBOL
IS FROM... RUSSIA'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS... MAFIA FAMILY..!
AGIRI GRADUATED FROM THE BEST UNIVERSITY THERE AND THEN JOINED THE MAFIA!
NO NEED TO BE SO POLITE ABOUT THEM.
THAT'S JUST IN BAD MOVIES!
HE'S DONE IT ALL EXCEPT FOR THEFT AND RAPE.
IT'S NOT JUST MOVIES! AND THAT'S NOTHING TO BE PROUD OF, YOU KNOW!?
WAIT...
DON'T SMALL-TIME MAFIA TYPES DO EVERY-THING BUT MURDER...?
HE'S RIGHT. I LEFT ALL THAT BEHIND.

AND IN RETURN FOR ME LEAVING,
THEY KILLED MY ENTIRE FAMILY
OTHER GANGS PICK FIGHTS BY CALLING US "ILLEGALS",
BUT THAT HONESTLY ISN'T THE CASE WITH AGIRI.
STANLEY AND I ARE JAPANESE CITIZENS,
THOUGH I DON'T HAVE ANY FAMILY LEFT.
HUH?
HIS PARENTS HANDED OVER THEIR MINDS AND PROPERTY, EVERYTHING, TO PW
THE PEOPLE HERE ARE MY FAMILY
THIS PLACE WAS FORE-CLOSED, AND I BOUGHT IT LEGALLY WE AREN'T SQUATTING HERE
THEY'RE PROBABLY STILL WORKING AT ONE OF THEIR OFFICES NOW
I DON'T KNOW IF THEY'RE DEAD OR ALIVE

I'M SORRY.
I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT HIS FAMILY OR PW—
NO, I'M SORRY. THIS TOOK A DARK TURN.
CREAK
WHAT IS IT, STANLEY?
I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT SINCE THE FIGHT.
I SAW THOSE GUYS TODAY THAT PW BRAINWASHED TO BE SOLDIERS
DESPITE THAT, I THINK OF BRAINWASHING AND DEPROGRAMMING
AS THINGS FAKE PSYCHICS DO
LIKE BENDING SPOONS AND SEEING SPIRITS

ARE YOU—
REALLY A DEPRO-GRAMMER?
tap.
YOUR SISTER? ISN'T SHE AT A FACILITY IN LOS ANGELES?
AND IF YOU MEAN YOUR SISTER—
THERE'S NO ONE HERE WHO'S BEEN BRAIN-WASHED.
STANLEY, DON'T BE HASTY.
RIGHT HERE AND NOW.
CAN YOU REALLY DEPRO-GRAM A MIND?


—NOBIRU, IT'S ABOUT TIME FOR US TO GO.
tap

SOMETHING WITH A CAMERA THAT CAN DO A VIDEO CALL
A TABLET WORKS TOO
YOU GOT A COMPUTER HERE, AGIRI?
I ASSUME YOU'VE GOT A REASON?
STANLEY CAN CALL UP THE PLACE IN L.A.
DO YOU KNOW THE TIME DIFFERENCE?
SO STANLEY,
I'M ASSUMING THAT YOUR SISTER WAS BRAINWASHED.
THAT THE GIST OF IT?

ONLY A DEPROGRAMMER CAN HELP YOUR SISTER.
WHAT'RE YOU THINKING!?
WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO!?
HEY, WHAT'RE YOU PLANNING TO DO!?
If I can get everyone in the Tower of Babel on my side all at once,
I have to try!